

Issue Update

Additions to Reserve

History

First Nations have been critical of the Government of Canada's Additions to Reserve (ATR) policy and process for years due to the inability to add lands to reserves in a timely and efficient manner.

In 2019, the Government of Canada committed to reforming the ATR policy and process. Canada committed \$43 million over three years in Budget 2021 to support policy reform and process improvements.

In 2022, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) initiated a phased approach to ATR reform. This approach began with preliminary engagements through the fall of 2022, followed by a call for funding proposals to support substantive engagement with First Nations in 2024. Following this engagement, CIRNAC plans to undertake an analysis and co-develop reform options with First Nations for validation and approval.

AFN's recent advocacy

Since 2020, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) has actively advocated for ATR Policy improvements through a Lands Table established with CIRNAC. This process provides a joint technical space to share information, provide feedback, and facilitate analysis of the ATR policy and process and includes a national ATR survey initiated in 2022 by the AFN.

In 2023, First Nations-in-Assembly passed AFN Resolution 17/2023, *Prioritizing Land Back Through All Federal Laws, Policies and Programs*. This resolution calls on the Government of Canada to facilitate and prioritize the return of lands to First Nations. The ATR Policy is one of many ways First Nations can reacquire their lands. The AFN's recent advocacy efforts are focused on ensuring that ATR policy changes are driven by the needs and priorities of First Nations and implemented with respect for First Nations Rights and self-determination.

Next Steps

Building on a past analysis of the ATR policy and process and recent efforts such as the 2022 national ATR survey, the AFN will engage with First Nations on ATR reform to determine how policy and legislative change can better support the return of lands to First Nations communities. This work is crucial for advancing reconciliation and will contribute to the long-term healing and well-being of First Nations.